

Mormons camp at Fort Laramie

May 29-June 4, 1847: Pioneers reach Fort Laramie in what is now Wyoming.

BY HAL KNIGHT AND
DR. STANLEY B. KIMBALL

Another in a series.

This week began with the pioneers receiving a strong tongue lashing from Brigham Young for their frivolity, dancing, card playing and profanity.

A much-subdued company later crossed what is now the Wyoming-Nebraska border and camped near Fort Laramie where they rejoiced to meet members of a band of Mormons from Mississippi who traveled west in 1846 and wintered at Pueblo (Colorado) on the Arkansas River.

After a cordial reception at the fort, Brigham Young rented a flatboat to ferry the pioneers over the Platte River because it was impossible to continue on the north side of the waterway. On the south side, the Mormons would join the heavily traveled Oregon Trail.

On June 3, a Thursday, the pioneers began ferrying their wagons about 5 a.m., getting a wagon to the opposite shore every 15 minutes. Howard Egan said a strong wind blowing up the river "made it easier crossing."

Four men were dispatched to Pueblo to get the more than 250 Church members there, including sick detachments of the Mormon Battalion, to move toward Fort Laramie and follow the pioneers to the Rocky Mountains.

Amasa Lyman, Thomas Woolsey, John H. Tinnette and

wagon was over," William Clayton reported.

A number of men walked to Fort Laramie to bid farewell. They deposited letters which fort officials promised would be sent along to Winter Quarters. Other mail was left for pioneers to collect as they reached the fort.

James Bordeaux, the fort superintendent, praised the Mormon pioneers for their behavior. He said that "never before had such a company passed Fort Laramie."

While at the fort, the pioneers heard that the Oregon Trail was getting crowded. A traveler from St. Joseph, Mo., said he passed more than 500 wagons coming from Missouri.

Just before noon a group of 17 Mormons from Pueblo, who had been camped at Fort Laramie awaiting the pioneers, joined their five wagons to the company. This raised the number in camp to 161, after the four men who went to Pueblo were subtracted.

The newcomers included Robert Crow, Elizabeth Crow, Benjamin B. Crow, Harriet Crow, Elizabeth Jane Crow, John McHenry Crow, Walter H. Crow, George W. Therkill, Matilla Jane Therkill, Milton Howard Therkill, James William Therkill,

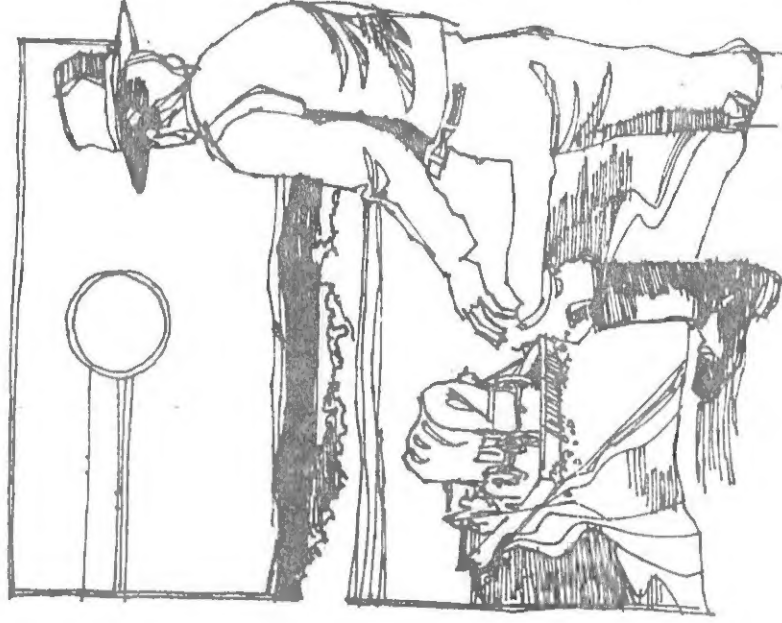
William Parker Crow, Isa Vinda Exene Crow, Ira Minda Almarena Crow, Archibald Little, James Chesney and Lewis B. Myers.

The Crow company also brought with them 11 horses, 22 cows, three bulls and seven calves. But some of the party were low on food supplies.

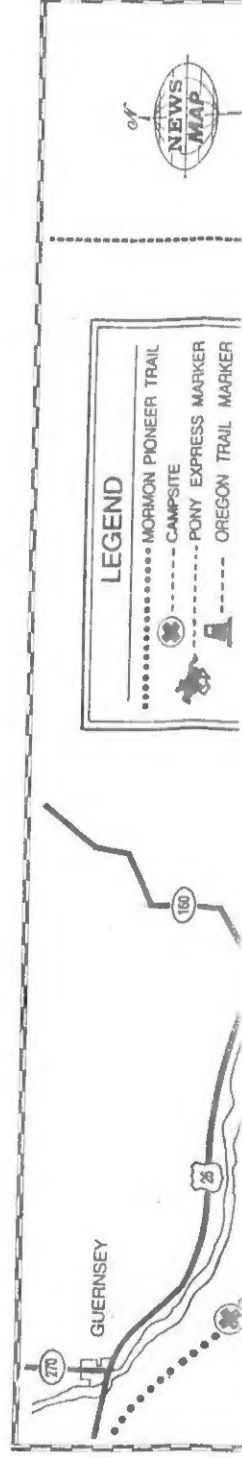
Addition of these animals raised the total in the pioneer company to about 300 livestock, not counting dogs and chickens. This is why the pioneers always were concerned about grazing places for cattle.

After leaving Fort Laramie the company marched about eight miles and descended a very steep hill. "All the wagon wheels had to be locked and we were some time getting down," Clayton wrote. Ropes had to be attached to the back of wagons and men strained to keep them from getting away down the steep slope. The pioneers moved a half mile from this hill and camped for the night.

Wagons were
ferried across
Platte River.



111 Days to Zion



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Amasa Lyman, Thomas Woolsey, John H. Tippetts and Roswell Stevens left camp about 11:15 a.m. They were accompanied a short distance by Brigham and others who held a short meeting, knelt down and dedicated the four to God and blessed them.

Many of the Mormons at Pueblo followed in the wake of the advance pioneer company and entered the Salt Lake Valley just a few days behind them.

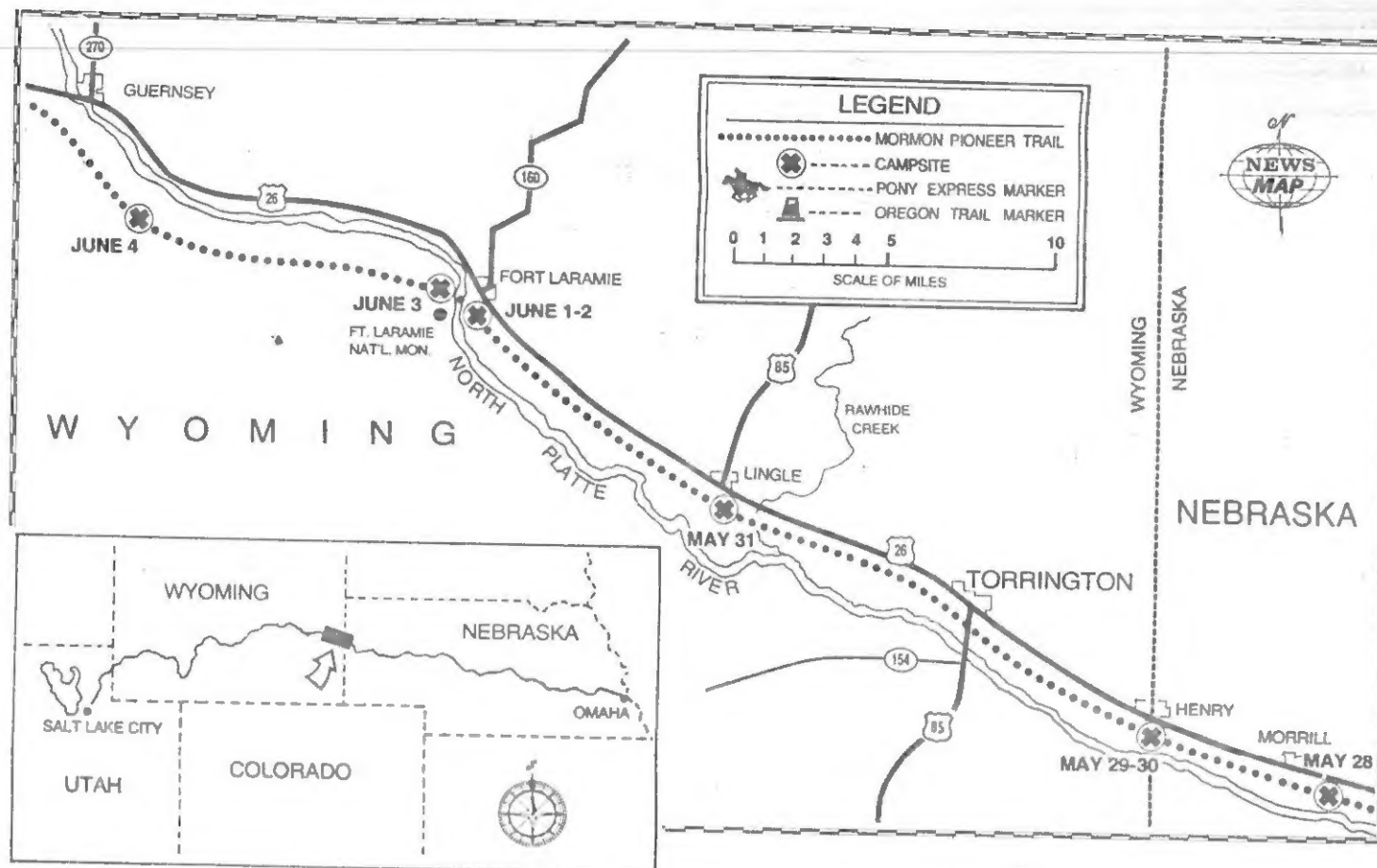
In the early afternoon a violent storm arose. Rain and hail lashed the pioneers and lightning split the sky. The job of ferrying boats over the river was halted while the storm raged for more than two hours.

Most of the horses already were across the river and were housed inside the abandoned Fort Platte near the pioneer crossing. Fort Laramie was about two miles from the ferry site.

At 3:30 p.m. the storm ceased and once again wagons were boated across the river. By 5 p.m. all of the first division was over. The second division began and worked even faster, averaging a wagon every 11 minutes.

But the storm broke out again at 7 p.m. and the pioneers were forced to give up for the night, leaving about 15 wagons on the north side of the Platte River.

The company was up before dawn on Friday, June 4, and commenced ferrying wagons at 4:40 a.m. and by 8 a.m. "the last



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THURSDAY, APRIL 15

The morning was cold, but pleasant, in the pioneer camp on the Platte river. Some of the brethren went across the flat to the Elkhorn to try their luck at fishing.

President Brigham Young, Elder Ezra T. Benson and others resumed their westward journey early in the morning and soon reached the Elkhorn, which they crossed on the ferry. Elders Heber C. Kimball, Newel K. Whitney, William Clayton and several others followed closely after, leaving the camp at 7:30 a. m. They reached the Elkhorn at 11:30 and half an hour later they, too, had made a successful crossing. On the west side of the river they overtook President Young and his company and Elders Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, Amasa M. Lyman and Erastus Snow, who had crossed the river the previous evening. The whole company then traveled together over the flat about 12 miles to the pioneer encampment, where they arrived about 3 p. m. and found the brethren busy with blacksmithing work and getting ready to continue the westward journey.

Thomas Bullock and the brethren with the extra teams, after crossing the river, also joined the balance of the company on the west side of the Elkhorn. While traveling over the flat toward the Platte Brother Bullock's wagon and that of George A.



Camp and Ferry at the Elkhorn
(After an original drawing by Frederick Piercy, 1853.)

Smith stuck in the mud, but by doubling teams and otherwise assisting each other, they finally got through and arrived at the pioneer camp at 4:40 o'clock.

President Young and those with him had traveled this day about 20 miles. The distance from Winter Quarters to the camp on the Platte was 47 miles, following the Indian

trail from Winter Quarters to the Elkhorn river.

In the evening Elder Jesse C. Little arrived in the pioneer camp from the eastern states. When he arrived at Winter Quarters and found that the twelve had left for the pioneer camp, he followed posthaste, leaving everything behind him. He gave the pioneers news from the branches of the church in the eastern states and spoke of many friends in that part of the country, among whom was Colonel Thomas L. Kane, who had remembered the quorum of the twelve and some others by forwarding a variety of little presents for them. Brother Little spent the night in the pioneer camp.

At 7:40 p. m. President Young mounted the front of his wagon and called aloud: "Attention, the Camp of Israel!" The brethren assembled at his wagon and the president addressed them in a short speech, instructing them to take care of their teams and cease all music, dancing and light mindedness; he also exhorted them to prayer and faithfulness and stated that the traders and missionaries were stirring up the Indians to plunder the "Mormons" of their horses and goods. But if the brethren would be faithful and obey counsel, the president said, the Lord would bless them and they would pass through the country in safety.

